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News Release

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Brooklyn Park woman pleads guilty to defrauding Aetna Pharmaceutical out of \$170,000

A 37-year-old Brooklyn Park woman has pleaded guilty today to defrauding Aetna Pharmaceutical out of \$170,000.

Sonia Reneada Clay pleaded guilty to one count of mail fraud for orchestrating a scheme to defraud the health insurance company by repeatedly submitting phony direct member prescription reimbursement claims. Clay entered her plea in St. Paul before United States District Court Judge Richard Kyle. Clay was charged on Sept. 16.

In the plea agreement, Clay admitted submitting claims that caused Aetna to issue her 41 checks totaling \$170,000. For example, on April 10, 2007, she received a check in the amount of \$2,787 via the U.S. Mail. Clay's scheme started on March 31, 2007, and ran through Oct. 24, 2008.

Clay faces a potential maximum penalty of 20 years in prison for her crime. Judge Kyle will determine her sentence at a future date. This case is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David M. Genrich.

According to the Justice Department, health care fraud investigations have been growing and, on May 20, the Department announced the formation of a senior-level task force to tackle health care fraud throughout the country. The Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team (HEAT), represented by the departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, looks at how to better share real-time intelligence data on health care fraud patterns and practices as well as critical information about health care services, pharmaceuticals and medical devices. In 2008, the Justice Department filed criminal charges in 502 health care fraud cases involving 797 defendants.